

# History of Journalism

History of Information, July 26, 2010

# Agenda

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- ▶ Papers
- ▶ News (Schudson)
- ▶ Presentation/On-call
- ▶ Propaganda (Martin)
- ▶ Presentation/On-call



## Recap – What Is News?

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- ▶ Seriality
- ▶ Periodicity
- ▶ Currency
- ▶ Independence
- ▶ Source
- ▶ Completeness



## Recap – News in Europe

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- ▶ Mid 15<sup>th</sup> C.: soon after printing's emergence, variety of printed material appears
  - ▶ Leaflets
  - ▶ Posters
  - ▶ Broadsheets
- ▶ Second 1/2 of 16<sup>th</sup> C.: periodical publications appear
- ▶ Beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> C.: advent of “modern” newspaper
  - ▶ News journals published with some degree of regularity

# News in England

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- ▶ 1702: First Daily Newspaper: Samuel Buckley's *Daily Courant*
- ▶ More specialized periodicals emerge soon afterward
- ▶ 1750
  - ▶ 5 well-established dailies
  - ▶ 6 - 3x/weeklies
  - ▶ 5 weeklies
  - ▶ Several other cut-rate periodicals
    - ▶ Total circulation: 100,000 copies/week
- ▶ Distributed via network of hawkers/agents/coffeehouses/taverns/postal services
  - ▶ Resulted in readership of perhaps 10x circulation?

# Commercialism and Freedom of the Press

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- ▶ **1712: Stamp Act in England**
  - ▶ Raises revenue for the Crown
  - ▶ Curtails proliferation of periodicals
  - ▶ Bentham, Mill and others protest the Act (and subsequent broadened revisions) in the name of liberty of the press
  - ▶ Eventually abolished in 1860s
  
- ▶ **France: Censorship remains until Revolution**
  - ▶ Reinstated by Napoleon
  
- ▶ “considerable force in the argument that the struggle for an independent press...played a key role in the development of the modern constitutional state.” –Thompson

# Journalism and Revolution

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- ▶ 1690-1760s America: colonial newspapers contained very little political information
  - ▶ 1728-1765: Out of 1,900 items in Pennsylvania Gazette, 34 touched on local politics
- ▶ 1765: Tension with British increases; rise of pamphlet reaches peak with *Common Sense*; politics and papers become deeply enmeshed

# Freedom of the Press

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- ▶ Did the struggles/events leading up to the Revolutionary War usher in a free press for America?





# Freedom of the Press, Post-Revolution

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- ▶ “Some of the nation’s founders believed that outspoken political criticism had been well justified when they were fighting a monarchy for their independence. But open critique of a duly elected republican government, they felt, could be legitimately curtailed.”
- ▶ Federalists dominate Constitutional debate by crowding out dissent
  - ▶ “papers, politics, propaganda?”
- ▶ Sedition Act of 1798: criminal offense to falsely/maliciously criticize government
- ▶ Does a free press only benefit the revolutionary?
  - ▶ Cf. last week’s Iran example



# “Penny Papers”

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- ▶ Price?
- ▶ Innovations?



# “Penny Papers”

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- ▶ **Price**
  - ▶ \$0.01!
- ▶ **Innovations**
  - ▶ Newsboy
  - ▶ Steam Press
  - ▶ Telegraph



# “The Story” vs. “The Facts”

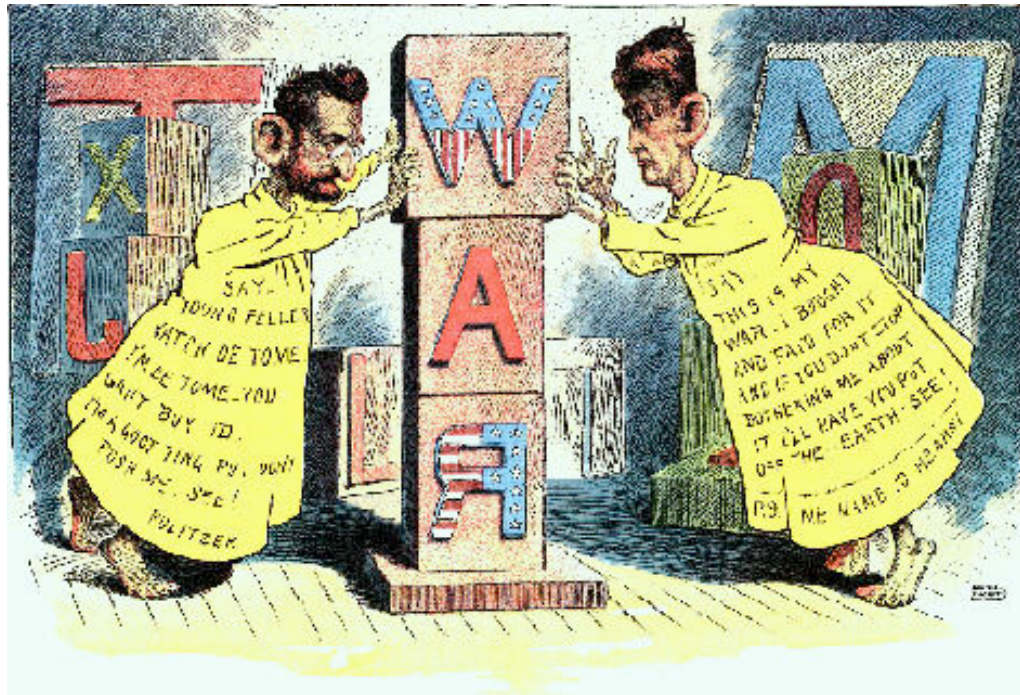
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- ▶ Increased commercialization, industrialization, commoditization
  - ▶ News as entertainment – aesthetic
  - ▶ News as information - functional



# Yellow Journalism

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# Pulitzer

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- ▶ *World*
  - ▶ Revived by Pulitzer in 1883
    - ▶ Innovative advertising policies
    - ▶ HEADLINES and **exposes**

# Hearst

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- ▶ *Journal*

- ▶ Bought by Hearst in 1895
- ▶ Crime and pseudoscience
- ▶ Sensationalistic stories seen as key in run-up to Spanish-American war

# Ochs

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- ▶ “He in the end taught...[his competitors] that decency meant dollars.” – Melville Stone
- ▶ “What made the *Times* respectable? What made it seem morally superior? Was it deemed respectable because it appealed to the affluent? Or did it appeal to the affluent because it was respectable? And if the latter, is “respectability” to be understood as a moral ideal emerging from the life experience of a particular social group at a particular time or as a moral ideal with legitimate claims to wider allegiance or, perhaps, both?”  
- Schudson



# Respectability's Downside

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From the Editors

## **The Times and Iraq**

**Published: May 26, 2004**

Over the last year this newspaper has shone the bright light of hindsight on decisions that led the United States into Iraq. We have examined the failings of American and allied intelligence, especially on the issue of Iraq's weapons and possible Iraqi connections to international terrorists. We have studied the allegations of official gullibility and hype. It is past time we turned the same light on ourselves...

...we have found a number of instances of coverage that was not as rigorous as it should have been. In some cases, information that was controversial then, and seems questionable now, was insufficiently qualified or allowed to stand unchallenged. Looking back, we wish we had been more aggressive in re-examining the claims as new evidence emerged — or failed to emerge...



# Objectivity

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- ▶ Hardly (if at all) used in journalistic context until 1920s
- ▶ New era of professionalism, growing reverence for “scientific” inquiry, efficiency, Progressive reform
  - ▶ Spurs PR/parajournalism/propaganda
- ▶ 1930s: *interpret* as well as report
- ▶ 1960s: full “respectability”
  - ▶ Just in time for Vietnam, Watergate...



# Perceptions of Objectivity

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- ▶ As mainstream institutions fragment, difficulty of authenticating sources increases
  - ▶ Shirley Sherrod, USDA



# The “Death of Journalism”?

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- ▶ No need for newspaper per se, but what are the consequences of an increasingly splintered, filtered, remixed news delivery system?

